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THESIS

**ELIMINATING WAR BY ELIMINATING WARRIORS: A
CASE STUDY IN COSTA RICA**

by

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March 2016

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**ELIMINATING WAR BY ELIMINATING WARRIORS:
A CASE STUDY IN COSTA RICA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

Armed conflicts have a destabilizing effect on individual nations and the international community alike. Conversely, reducing warfare has a positive effect on both national and international affairs. Stable nations equate to stable borders, which, in turn, improve cross-cultural communications and global commerce. This thesis uses Costa Rica as a case study to examine the efficacy of reducing armed conflict by eliminating individual national forces. The key to promoting peace through abolishing the military lies in four elements: culture, economic evolution, domestic developments, and external threats.

This paper relies on historical observations, legal mandates, cross-national comparisons, and third-party analysis to understand how Costa Rica has been able to abolish its army and maintain a successful military-free society. The four elements of culture, economic evolution, domestic development, and external threats appear in virtually every source, so this work analyzes each element in sequence as it relates to Costa Rica. Finding the proper mix of elements can help gauge which regimes will peacefully relinquish armed forces and thus contribute to peaceful globalization.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATF	Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms
CAF	Central American Federation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DTO	Drug Trafficking Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
OAS	Organization of American States
OIF	Organismo de Investigacion Judicial
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
UFC	United Fruit Company
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two
WWIII	World War Three

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1948, the Second World War had recently ended, and the Cold War was just beginning. The new global conflict replaced the overt aggression of active war with the subversive threat of nuclear annihilation. The constant menace of renewed violence pitted democracy and capitalism against communism and command-driven economies. This so-called Cold War polarized the globe by forcing nations to choose which superpower to align with, the United States on one side or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) on the other. As the world started falling into camps and the superpowers began to build up nuclear arsenals for the security afforded by mutually assured destruction (MAD), Costa Rica made arguably the most radical military maneuver of any nation and disbanded its military.

This thesis examines the motivating factors that contributed to Costa Rica's radical decision with the hopes of extrapolating universally applicable traits that foster peace as effectively as security dilemmas propagate violence. Ideology was only one of multiple factors that contributed to the decision of which alignment strategy a nation embraced during the Cold War. Other factors, such as political convenience, economic gambles, and national security, went into a country's choice. In Costa Rica's case, the small Central American nation can attribute its peaceful entrepreneurship to the four general themes of culture, economic evolution, domestic development, and lack of external threats. These four elements are the basic ingredients of an army-less society, and understanding how to transplant peace internationally should begin with them.

The following argues that Costa Rica's decision to abolish its armed forces was pursuant to the four elements named above, and this research focuses attention on each of these elements. This paper describes the alternatives to a standing army employed by Costa Rica to demonstrate how civilian organizations can assume the burdens of some military functions. Each of the four elements has its own additional factors, and each is connected to the others in the grander scheme of political science. The collaboration of these four elements along with unique aspects of Costa Rica's evolution has produced an

ideal environment wherein an expeditionary force was neither necessary nor desired for their consolidated democracy.

That Costa Rica, or any other nation, would disband its armed forces is significant for both internal and external reasons. Domestically, nations create militaries that help to define the government's role in relation to its own people. The military can be a tool to unite the populace through shared responsibility (like compulsory military service), protect from foreign threats (like legally mandated self-defense forces), gain resources from other countries (as the metaphorical muscle behind extractive nations), or subjugate its own citizens (as has been seen in countless societies throughout history). In every scenario, the military establishes a link between the government and the governed. Therefore, any nation without a military has a non-conventional relationship between the civil-leadership and the people, and should be studied as an anomaly to the global norm.

If combating a common enemy is an efficient method for building national pride and unity, understanding how a country builds a sense of collection without military campaigns can enlighten other world leaders. If protection of a nation's home soil is the goal, and fighting wars on foreign soil is much more appealing than defending one's homeland from the standpoint of upended infrastructure, then how then does Costa Rica maintain its security without expeditionary "peace keepers" and can other countries do the same? Likewise, the lack of an external fighting force makes the prospect of encroachment on outside nations' sovereignty, at least through forcible means, impossible. Having no military makes Costa Rica's neighbors safer, and by extension, increases the prospects for global peace. If world peace is the goal, then abolition of militaries may be part of the answer.

The complex relationship between a government and its people has a sordid past, especially in view of the armed representatives of the population. Military coups, oppressive regimes, and human rights abuses are not extraordinary occurrences and are often linked to one another. In Latin America, military coups often evolved into oppressive regimes rife with corruption and human rights violations. Costa Rica has found a rudimentary method for insuring against these complex problems.

Domestic mêlées not only affect the citizens of the nation, they also influence the international community at large. A stable nation equates to more stable borders. Stable borders correlate to strong commerce and cross-cultural communications. Commerce and communication improve quality of life for citizens making them more stable, and so on, in an infectious virtuous circle. Furthermore, the means, methods, and motivations for going to war have been studied for as long as war has existed. If preventing death and suffering due to international war can be distilled into a formula, even one with limited applicability, then the study is surely worth doing.

Many of the current international relations (IR) theories center precisely on war-making tendencies. Competing theories like realism, liberalism, and constructivism attempt to formulate the conditions in which a nation would either subject itself to the horrors of armed conflict or keep itself from them. Finding the proper mix of theories that can stipulate what regime will peacefully relinquish control of its armed forces will positively manipulate policy makers at all levels. This paper uses firsthand historical observations, current legal mandates, cross-national social and economic comparisons, as well as third-party analysis. The four elements of culture, economic evolution, domestic development, and external threats, appear in virtually every source. The frequency of the four common elements, despite an ocean of factors that contribute to national identity, is the reason they are singled out for analysis in this thesis.

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II. COSTA RICAN CULTURE

Costa Ricans pride themselves on being different, not just when compared to their neighbors, but when compared to the rest of the world. This chapter describes aspects of the unique Costa Rican culture and examines its origins.

A. RURAL DEMOCRACY

As a matter of national pride, Costa Ricans consider their heritage to be one of egalitarian shaping. The concept of inclusive political representation out of agrarian necessity is known as rural democracy.¹ Unlike most other “New World” colonies, Costa Rica did not have an abundance of forced aboriginal labor, large imports of slaves, or a class system as robust as its neighbors did, and was thus forced to develop a unified method of governance. Though the idea of foundational rural democracy is debatable, it has nonetheless woven its way into Costa Rica’s national identity. That is, regardless of the truth behind the theory, Costa Ricans have internalized the idea of historical social equality and that is now a central national inspiration.

Social gradations based on rank (military or otherwise) would have been a foreign concept to early Costa Ricans. The concept that all citizens toil, suffer, and benefit together, inherently establishes an idea of a near rank-less social structure.² In a country that has little respect for tiered systems of social status, military structure is unwelcome. Furthermore, Costa Ricans consider themselves to be more socially advanced than their regional peers and an exemplary post-modern nation. Post-modern theory suggests that “without the threat of invasion, Western states no longer needed to buttress armed forces so distinctive from the social values of the larger society,” and military forces are contrary to the idea of social equality, one of the mainstay social values of early Costa

¹ John Patrick Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 5.

² Ibid

Rica.³ The post-modern military mirrors the ideals of social equity by insisting that the structure of conscripted soldiers subservient to an officer class is an obsolete construct.⁴ Since, according to post-modern theory, social equality is the evolutionary end of societies, Costa Rica would have been primed for this end state at its very inception.

Geography played a key role in the concept of rural democracy and social egalitarianism. The region of colonization was a vital point in shaping Costa Rica's social structure. When the Spanish kingdom was able to establish its colony, it was in the highlands in the interior of the nation. Establishing settlements inland, versus on the coast like most other new settlements, had three immediate effects.

First, illnesses were mitigated. The tropical nature of Costa Rican coasts lends itself to postcards and getaways in the 21st century, but these areas "until the recent advances made by science in the control of disease were all but unpopulated and of negligible economic value."⁵ The move inland was an attempt at escaping the ravages of disease.

Second, aside from the physiological difficulties associated with coastal living, there were also human threats. Settlements on the coast existed in visible and unfortified positions. Piracy in the region effectively shaped the colonization patterns for the Spanish empire. Not only did the crown not want to lose investments, pioneers were in no hurry to lose their lives. Besides piracy, new settlers also had to contend with attacks from hostile native groups. Though Eurocentric sentiment remembers Christopher Columbus as a discoverer, indigenous inhabitants would certainly disagree, violently, at the time. Early attempts at establishing Spanish presence in the area were stifled by conflict with local tribes.⁶ Since the first settlers were generally not militarily trained, avoiding conflict by

³ Charles Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, "Armed Forces After the Cold War," in *The Post Modern Military*, eds. Charles Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Chester Lloyd Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1935), 43.

⁶ "The World Factbook: Costa Rica," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed 30 January 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>.

moving inland was the best defense. Once free to settle with relatively little molestation, Spanish colonials could set to work on establishing a viable society.

Third, and perhaps most important to establishing rural democracy, protections garnered from highland living resulted in isolation for the pioneers. Keeping a good distance from pirates necessarily meant holding up far enough away from the water to prevent sea-based attacks, but also limiting communication channels by removing easy access to the sea. As for attacks by indigenous peoples, there were fewer attacks because there were fewer natives in the highlands, which meant a smaller pool of a potential working class and intermarriage partners. The bulk of workers then were the pioneers themselves, and not a separate and subjugated class.

Spain's colonial economic model was to make use of a perceived abundance in a working class. Again, Eurocentric philosophy drove colonial decisions. Royal powers felt that socially inferior people were best suited for hard manual labor. The efficiency of labor is the crux of the absolute advantage concept to which colonies counted on for profitable extraction.⁷ Colonial powers then, assigned a higher worth to lands wherein their settlers could exploit native tribes and use them as a labor resource. The forced servitude of native peoples was one of the motivations for conquering foreign lands, yet isolated settlements made subjugation in Costa Rica a far different affair.

Sister expeditions sent to settle and "civilize" the new world shared many common characteristics to include the method of native impressments. Spanish colonies had long since followed the policy of *encomienda*. Quite simply, the *encomienda* system was imposed slavery on native peoples. The Spanish Crown gave its consent to all colonials to mandate service of any encountered indigenous tribes. The services were mostly labor related, but there was no restriction on the work required from the slaves. As despicable as the system was, it was comparatively more civil in Costa Rica than similar settlements in Guatemala and El Salvador.⁸

⁷ Thomas A. Pugel, *International Economics 15th Ed.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 36.

⁸ Bruce M. Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 10.

Early Costa Rican settlements were not as conducive to *encomienda* as other regional outposts for two reasons. The first factor restricting *encomienda* was the relative scarcity of natives available for exploitation. Again, residing in isolated regions provided protection from raids but forced more self-reliance on the part of the farmers. That forced labor was not used because of a lack of indigenous people to exploit—not because of a lack of will to exploit them—adds credibility to a happenstance foundation for rural democracy.

The second blow to the forced labor system was the growing protests from the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was the religious authority of the Spanish Crown and was able to exert pressure on all aspects of Spanish governance. The church encouraged a much weaker servile system in Costa Rica.⁹ Through church efforts, *encomienda* evolved into a system where the Spanish representative government assigned labor age natives (older than 16) to a colonial settler for a scheduled period. The assigned worker was obligated to spend one week per month in service to the designated settler. The new system of part-time servitude was called *repartimiento*. Barbaric and shameful, *repartimiento* was still a much more liberated model than the previous enslavement system and adds further credibility to the theory that Costa Rica developed a more equal society from the start, though natives were kept under either *encomienda* or *repartimiento* until the 18th century.¹⁰

Early 20th century Latin American writer, Mario Sancho, supports the rural democracy theory when he noted:

First we must say that in Costa Rica there has never really been an aristocracy ... all came from Spain without great fortunes and none managed to acquire one here ... Those who did achieve riches in the nineteenth century had a strong and better cultivated sense of social cooperation.¹¹

⁹ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 10.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Since there were fewer potential slaves from which to pull workers and no real aristocratic system to propagate class distinction, Costa Rican settlers developed a class system made up of fewer tiers than comparable colonies.

The size of cultivated tracts was also a contributing factor to social egalitarianism and rural democracy. The settled highlands required the cultivation of much smaller tracts of land compared to sister colonies in the New World. Far different from relying on large numbers of a deprived social class for work, Costa Rican settlers would have had minimal outside help in tilling their land, requiring smaller plots. These smaller plots were in stark contrast to the plantation-style haciendas that were on the rise in other parts of Latin America. The hard labor required of these settlers coalesced their identity as “Ticos” (Costa Ricans), and alternately raised or depleted their spirits together. The conditions were so trying that in a 1719 correspondence with the King of Spain, the Costa Rican governor lamented, “There is not in the entire monarchy a province so indigent as this.”¹² Small plots of land, thinned numbers of natives, and the erosion of *encomienda*, required that the workers on plots of land small be familial units. All of these factors collaborate to make a strong case for the establishment of rural democracy.¹³

That said, Costa Rica’s history differs greatly from the widely accepted view of the people. Though known among its citizenry as a nation based in the principles of equality and justice, a history of income and racial disparities show otherwise. John A. Booth remarked in his book, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy*, that, “Costa Rica is considerably less homogenous and egalitarian than its myth suggests.”¹⁴ For proof, Booth presents an economic analysis demonstrating that the bottom 20% of Ticos enjoyed less than 5% of the nation’s wealth, while the top 10% of Costa Ricans made up more than 30% of the wealth. The numbers presented by Booth contradict the concept of a non-stratified society. Booth goes on to describe the stark racial delineations discussed in Chapter III of this work. In the end, rural democracy establishing a nation of equals is not

¹² Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 56.

¹³ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 12.

¹⁴ John A. Booth, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 82.

supported by modern observation, but Costa Rican citizens have internalized the idea, and belief in the idea goes a long way toward realization of the ideal. By 1948, when the military was abolished, these ideals of rural democracy and social equality were over four centuries old and were rooted in Tico identity.

B. DECENTRALIZED LEADERSHIP

Early governing in Costa Rica mirrored the growing pains of physical settlement. One crucial obstacle to a permanent colony was the lack of recognized leadership in the new region. The land had been discovered by Columbus and, according to contracts he signed with the crown, belonged to him and his progeny. Despite the legalities of the agreement, no one in the Columbus line was given charge of the discovered lands until more than three decades after their initial discovery, and even then, they were only given “25 leagues square” of mostly worthless land.¹⁵ Columbus’s descendants eventually sold their stake in the land for a nominal fee after fighting so long to acquire it.

Ironically, part of the Columbus families’ difficulty in procuring leadership of the new colony was their own hubris. In an attempt to bolster his accomplishment to his financiers, Christopher Columbus’s discovery was given an enticing name. Before it was called Costa Rica, which means Rich Coast, it was named *Veragua*, or Seeing Water. The rebranding of the region was most likely done for the same reason that Greenland, a land almost completely covered by ice and snow and devoid of useful vegetation, was given its name. Kings and queens financed exploration, and conquistadors garnered the glory. The name of a discovered region was as important to future colonial opportunity as to the reputation of the discoverer, so Veragua was renamed Costa Rica to attract more settlers, pique the interest of more investors, and bolster the reputation of its European discoverer. The rebranding worked well and that resulted in multiple claims to the new area, impeding clearly defined leadership.

Besides the Columbus family’s claims, several other European adventurers made claim to Costa Rica. Despite the interests expressed by fortune seekers and explorers, the

¹⁵ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 11.

Spanish crown did not appoint leadership of the area until 1565. In the interim, Costa Rican settlers had decades of shaping as a communal society absent the normal hierarchical structure that usually marked royal colonies. Moreover, a lack of strong leadership on the continent meant that strong military directives from a central leader never existed, and instead, allegiance was to a kingdom on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

When a government was finally accepted, it was built on precarious ground: the persistent degradation of the native population, politically appointed governors, financial dependence on Guatemalan coffers, and imported agricultural prospects that were both unremarkable and of poor yield when they were finally reaped. Despite its problematic origins and its isolation from other colonies, early settlers remained loyal to Spanish rule for centuries. The Napoleonic overthrow of the Spanish throne saw a re-conviction of loyalty to Spain through mostly symbolic displays of solidarity. More forcefully, when armed revolt against the Spanish homeland flared in neighboring Nicaragua, Costa Rica mounted military forces to suppress the uprising.¹⁶ The skirmish between Nicaragua and Costa Rica was a rare occurrence for the Spanish colony and began a feud between the bordering countries that still affects relations today. Though there has never been a true war between the two countries, their relationship is strained. Thus, Costa Rica's oldest regional feud stems from its oldest military effort, a fact not lost on the nation.

Leadership in Costa Rica was slow to take hold because Costa Rica was mostly content to stay a part of, yet apart from, the Spanish empire. Ultimately, it was not until 1821, after the Mexican Empire was granted independence, that Costa Rica followed suit and peacefully broke ties with its former kingdom. By the time the Central American nation separated from Spain, it had been a separated colony for more than 300 years.

Historians James N. Cortada and James W. Cortada's examination of Central American culture finds two pervasive attitudes that help define the prevailing attitudes of the region. Costa Ricans are characterized by the absence of compromise and intense

¹⁶ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 19.

individualism, and both can be traced back to the country's establishment as a leaderless society. Ticos display both of these traits in a compound "haughty individualism" that is diametrically opposed to military service.¹⁷ The researchers note that, "to compromise as a voluntary action free from pressure can be viewed as an act of magnanimity. But to do so in the face of 'do it or else,' even by force of circumstances, raises a challenge to one's machismo, or manhood."¹⁸ Uniformity and conformation are bedrocks of military service. If Ticos culturally have an aversion to delegated authority, one that requires submission via the threat of adverse consequences, then military service is incompatible. An important point here is not that Ticos collectively had affinity for anarchy. On the contrary, Costa Rican culture simply used a collective respect for democracy and democratic rule as the centerpiece for order, while other nations used military rule for the same end. The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) presented a report in 2006 acknowledging that, "when people accept democratic authority, they recognize the fundamentals of democracy; and when they also accept tolerance, they are willing to live their lives under the 'rules of the game,' which then make up the predictable norms and stability of an era."¹⁹ By fully vesting in democracy, Costa Ricans are fully vested in the social order that comes with it, without the need for military rule.

After the Second World War and the rise of the nuclear age, Costa Rica recognized the futility of engaging in an arms race with rivals. Rather than waiting for a conflict that it would likely lose, Costa Rica decided to dispel its military on its own terms. By doing so, Costa Rica was able to maintain cultural autonomy even while abandoning an armed forward presence, thus making the only decision it could to hold on to individuality. In the same way, Costa Rican citizens choose not to enter military

¹⁷ James N. Cortada and James W. Cortada, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Caribbean, Cuba, and Central America* (New York: Praeger and CBS Educational and Professional Publishing, 1995), 106.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jorge Vargas and Rosero Bixby, "Cultura Politica de La Democracia en Costa Rica," *LAPOP* (December 2006): 61.

service as it is an activity that would strip them of their individuality. Costa Rican individualism even rivals the infamous free spirit of its parent nation, Spain.²⁰

C. DESIRE FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Costa Rica, much like the rest of Central America, still idolizes the revolutionary leader Simon Bolivar and his dream of a unified isthmus. Since breaking up in 1824 into five separate nations, “Central Americans have repeatedly attempted to achieve unity once again” but have been unable to reach consensus on what that consolidation should look like.²¹ Attempts at unification, via peaceful means, have been a hallmark of Costa Rican regional politics and alignment strategies. As a contribution to disarmament, Costa Rica led the Tlatelolco negotiations, Marblehead treaty talks, and numerous other local agreements. To facilitate economic collaboration, Costa Rica submitted to the Central American Common Market.²² In an attempt to combine all of the issues that affect Central America and tie that region to the rest of the Western Hemisphere, Costa Rica has been an active member in the Organization of American States. Costa Rica was even the first nation to submit to international elections monitoring in 1962, where it showed itself as an exemplar to the rest of the world.²³ None of Costa Rica’s attempts at regional unity is consistent with building, maintaining, or employing military forces.

D. CULTURAL CONCLUSIONS

Costa Rican culture has been consolidated through centuries of dedication and practice. Rural democracy, even if more myth than fact in its beginnings, has now taken root in the national consciousness. Ticos point to their shared history as an isolated colonial agrarian collective as the reason for their lack of social strata. The absence of appointed leadership for the first generations of Costa Rica enabled the growth of a

²⁰ Cortada, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Caribbean*, 106.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 54.

²³ Arturo Santa Cruz, “Constitutional Structures, Sovereignty, and the Emergence of Norms: The Case of International Election Monitoring,” *International Organization* 59, (Summer 2005), 672.

collective identity as opposed to one reliant on Spain. Last, the desire for peaceful coexistence like the kind envisioned by the regional hero Simon Bolivar, guides Costa Rica's interactions with its Central American peers. Costa Rica's history has shaped a culture disinclined to military force.

III. ECONOMIC EVOLUTION

Regardless of what Costa Rica has become today, it started out as an economic investment for the Spanish Kingdom and part of its socio-political evolution has required significant economic restructuring. Since the economic motivations for Costa Rica played so heavily into its foundation and currently factor into political decisions, understanding the nation's economic incentives is an important pillar in understanding its lack of a military.

In many nations, Costa Rica included, a choice has to be made with respect to where a nation should invest its resources. In a budding nation, investments in education, healthcare, or military might are secondary to improvements in means of production. As a nation matures so too do the requirements of its citizens for both production and human development. Costa Rica's economic development can be understood by examining the historical foundations, economic transition, and socio-economic alterations. Where these aspects are not directly opposed to military structure, they are inhospitable to it.

A. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The pattern of economic growth in emerging markets is a structured and well-studied phenomenon. Economic theorist and Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter devised a model for economic development that divides growth into three stages. The first of Porter's junctures is the Factor-Driven Stage. According to Porter: "In the Factor-Driven stage, basic factor conditions such as low-cost labor and access to natural resources are the dominant sources of competitive advantage and international products."²⁴ Under this model the microeconomic inputs provided in the earliest days of a nation have the largest effects on economic status in the long run. Professor Porter's stage theory of economic development suggests that while "A stable set of political institutions, a trusted legal context, and sound fiscal and monetary policies" that characterizes macroeconomics "contribute greatly to a healthy economy" they are not as

²⁴ Michael E. Porter, "Enhancing the Microeconomic Foundations of Prosperity: The Current Competitiveness Index," Harvard Business School, 8.

important as microeconomic conditions.²⁵ Microeconomic factors have a greater impact on building a nation's wealth because they shape the environment wherein firms will operate. Aspects of the economic environment like human resources, capital resources, and physical infrastructure can and should be provided by the government.²⁶

Professor Porter's theories are especially useful for examining fledgling economies, as local macroeconomic institutions would have not yet developed. Microeconomic conditions, and the role of the government, are central to understanding the birth of Costa Rica. Costa Rica began as a rugged and harsh Spanish colony, which for years tried in vain to establish a permanent presence. Geography and climate collaborated against settlers to make extremely inhospitable living environments. Perhaps worse for the Spanish crown, were the harsh agricultural environments since the colonial structure of the epoch revolved around commodities, just as the Porter theory would suggest. Spain's particular method of colonial capitalization through commodities was extractive in nature.

Economist Daron Acemoglu and political scientist James A. Robinson draw a sharp distinction between inclusive economies and extractive economies. An inclusive economy is one that allows its participants to leverage their individual skills for both personal and national gain. Conversely, extractive economies are those "designed to extract incomes and wealth from one subset of society to benefit a different subset."²⁷ The extractive nature of the Spanish model assigned worth to a colony only so long as the colony was producing; so instead of investments in long-term infrastructure or human capital, the extracted colony relies on minimum investments to quicker yield endeavors like agriculture. Reliance on agriculture, while effective in the short term for establishing tradable goods, can easily lead to economic stagnation.

²⁵ Porter, "Enhancing the Microeconomic Foundations of Prosperity," 1.

²⁶ Ibid., 7

²⁷ Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 76.

Stagnation at stage one in the Porter model is not the goal of any nation. Even centuries ago it was not in a power's best interest to only produce agricultural products, however, colonies of the great exploratory powers were designed for exploitation, not advancement. Settlements like Costa Rica were only tools for increasing the strength of the kingdom they represented. Thus, little attention was paid to any development beyond that which would increase production of commodities. The new Caribbean colony, however, had nothing in the way of either agriculture or minerals to provide the kingdom and was on a mission to find utility.²⁸

Costa Rica's limited success with producing tradable goods played a factor in its reluctance to separate from the crown. Farmers made early attempts at cultivating tobacco, mules, cattle, and cacao but nothing would raise Costa Rica from its place as the poorest colonial province.²⁹ In the early 18th century, Costa Ricans were either so strapped for cash or so isolated from concern for government money that the settlers began using cacao beans as a form of currency.³⁰

Economically there was no reason for the parent kingdom to bear the expense of a military on Costa Rican soil. The region was already dominated by the Spanish presence so there was no need for military conquest of neighbors, nor was there any reason for neighbors to conquer it. Protection of the settlers (from piracy or indigenous raids) was done through informal and less expensive means than paying professional soldiers. Also, as an extension of the crown, Costa Rican pioneers could trust that the kingdom would handle any military needs that the settlement had.

B. ECONOMIC TRANSITION

The economy of Costa Rica took a permanent turn for the better with the introduction of the coffee plant some time in the first decade of the 19th century. Before coffee, Costa Rica had been used for generally perishable commodities (of limited

²⁸ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 10.

²⁹ Ibid., 24.

³⁰ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 111.

shipment) and relatively scarce mineral resources (of slow production). Coffee took so well to the colony that before the end of the century, it would account for more than 90% of national export revenues.³¹ The plant also helped make Costa Rica a self-sufficient economy that no longer needed Spanish money. By 1821, or roughly one generation after coffee's introduction, Costa Rica separated from Spain.

Settlers embraced the new crop en masse. A mid-19th century visitor noticed "all are merchants or producers of coffee or often both at once. The generals, ministers, consuls, doctors, lawyers, even the judges have counter and store."³² Coffee had such a profound impact on the economy that Costa Rica went from the poorest Spanish colony in the New World to the wealthiest nation in Central America by 1890.³³ Yet coffee is still a commodity and as such lends itself to the negative effects thereof.

Both, the people and the government, gave so much deference to the crop that infrastructure was approved, financed, and built solely because of its potential impacts on coffee yields. Costa Rican President Braulio Carrillo Colina was dedicated enough to the crop to give free saplings and land to any farmer willing to grow it.³⁴ The government improved infrastructure by using resources gained by coffee exports, which in turn facilitated more national improvements to infrastructure and so on. This method of government involvement takes place in modern burgeoning economies as well and, as Professor Porter notes, "Along virtually all dimensions, microeconomic circumstances can be influenced markedly by purposeful action in both government and the private sector."³⁵ Coffee production was undertaken with such gusto that it climbed 1,800% in just seven years. Output during this time span grew from approximately 110,000 pounds in 1834 to almost 20 million pounds by 1841.³⁶ The economic growth, ushered in by the government, had an unanticipated social problem.

³¹ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 24.

³² Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 116.

³³ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 24.

³⁴ Ibid., 25.

³⁵ Porter, "Enhancing the Microeconomic Foundations of Prosperity," 3.

³⁶ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 58.

Coffee's growth brought a corresponding expansion in the previously mild gap between rich and poor. Processing coffee is a labor-intensive practice. Because of the labor demands of exposing coffee beans from shells, land barons would parcel out portions of their land in exchange for workers' efforts in processing. This model was only nominally better than the colonial practice of repartimiento. The barons were now able to diversify their business exploits into distribution as well as production, thus capitalizing on government infrastructure. These landed-elites quickly became trade-elites because of their ability to diversify.

Unlike during the time that Costa Rica fell under Spanish rule, the new nation of Costa Rica had found its economic footing, developed a profitable society, and the argument can be made that they needed their military. Though there were no Costa Rican desires for conquest, the same cannot be said for its neighbors, which no longer had the same parent state. Also, a strong state expressed as a strong military, could be used to keep order within the state, as the economic environment was about to evolve into something as yet completely foreign to the Ticos. Despite the growing threats to sovereignty, Costa Rica still had no need for a standing army as robust as the kind the United States had empowered. Professor Pion-Berlin notes that in fact all of Latin America has differed in this regard. Professor Pion-Berlin says, "There has never been the kind of permanent security-threat environment that warrants investing the resources and talent necessary to create sophisticated war machines," and likewise the infrastructure and supporting institutions required to run said war machine is also absent.³⁷ Because of this, the armies that did exist when Costa Rica needed them were weak enough that they did not help define the state.

³⁷ David S. Pion-Berlin, "Political management of the military in Latin America," in *Military Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (January-February 2005): 19-31. (Available through Library), 1.

C. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ALTERATIONS

In other regions of the new world, landed elites developed separately from trade-elites following some economic shift or expansion.³⁸ This widening of the upper class to include more people was not the case in Costa Rica, which allowed already comparatively wealthy settlers to become wealthier. As rich settlers became richer, they diversified even more. For the government, this became a problem when the diversification of elite businesses started to infringe on duties otherwise under the jurisdiction of the government.

The elites created a banking system that relied on loans from British banks re-loaned by Costa Rican Barons at much higher interest rates than they themselves were being charged. When Tico President Juan Mora Porras made a play to establish a national bank that would rival the banking system established by upper class Costa Ricans, the elites responded by fomenting a successful military coup.³⁹ A strong national force that owed loyalty to the state alone would have nullified a coup attempt, but again such an institution had no precedent in Costa Rica.

Paradoxically, government improvements to state infrastructure, made for the purpose of economic advantage, were so efficient that they created an elite class powerful enough to challenge the central government successfully. Even more ironic, the turbulent government encouraged by elites did nothing to aid in national economic advancement, even though it allowed for personal economic advancement in the short run. Here, like with post-liberated Central America, political turmoil and military violence had supremely detrimental effects on Costa Rica's economy.

In addition to the political ramifications of coffee distribution in Costa Rica, are the hard economic realities that come with reliance on one cash crop. For example, demand for Costa Rican coffee both drove international trade and tied the economy to it. As early as 1883 and until the economic reestablishment after WWI, almost half of the all

³⁸ Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith, *Modern Latin America* 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.

³⁹ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 25.

Costa Rican coffee exports were sent to just one market, the British Isles.⁴⁰ The British are not devoted coffee drinkers. British consumers only drink about 1/12th as much coffee per capita as Americans.⁴¹ The British utilized Costa Rican coffee over other coffee producers simply as a matter of convenience. Through this market dynamic we see that Costa Rica not only relied on a single crop for its economic prosperity, but also relied heavily on very few consumers, specifically Great Britain. Furthermore, in this relationship Great Britain is not engendered to Costa Rica for anything that it cannot get from a competitor like Brazil, Mexico, Jamaica, or any other coffee-producing nation. Costa Rican President Cleto Gonzalez Viquez articulated the problem best when he said, “Prosperity or hard times for Costa Rica is forged in London.”⁴² For both economic and political security, Costa Rica would have to widen its trade footprint. See Table 1.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 61.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 63.

Table 1. Costa Rican Exports to Chief Destinations and Total Percentages by Value

	Germany	U.S.	France	U.K.	Total
1883	10.8	27.1	10.8	47.9	96.6
1888	5.4	37.8	3.2	52.8	99.2
1893	3.8	42.8	0.2	52.9	99.7
1898	--	--	--	--	--
1903	4.6	41.9	2.3	48.8	97.6
1908	2.8	52.6	0.2	43.11	98.71
1913	4.89	50.77	0.9	41.83	98.39
1918	--	96.45	--	0.61	97.06
1923	1.01	34.57	0.64	61.93	98.15
1928	9	30	0.1	53	92.1
1930	9.9	25.73	--	59.2	94.83
1932	7.4	39.3	--	47.1	93.8

Source: Chester Lloyd Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1935), 95.

Unfortunately for the republic, even moderately successful attempts at national diversification had only limited results. Eventually, Costa Rica became the first Central American nation to export the, currently ubiquitous, banana for foreign consumption. The banana did not become a cash crop in Costa Rica until after coffee was an already well-established export. The reasons behind the lag in the banana's significance fall on two common themes: landscape and coffee.

First, the problematic landscape in Costa Rica kept the banana from wider propagation. Since the regions first inhabited by Costa Rican settlers were in the highlands, areas not good for producing tropical fruits, it was not until settlements expanded to more tropical regions that banana plantations became feasible. Second, coffee had taken such a hold over the nation's agriculture that bananas only became a part of the national model as a side function of coffee and even then only accidentally so through the efforts of foreign investors.

In Costa Rica, having no strong state military left a gap in shaping the identity of the state. Economic drivers filled in where state militia or a standing army would otherwise have existed. The American United Fruit Company and the power such an organization wielded in Costa Rica is evidence that instead of military service or defense against a common enemy as a catalyst for unity, the previous toils of agriculture morphed into unity over what was produced, then to how it was sold, until eventually the actual nationality of producers was only a secondary matter. An armed uniform service would have clashed with this economic model and would have been unwelcome because of it.

The changing economic structure caused by the proliferation of coffee dictated not just who was wealthy, but also what expanded institutions would be profitable and what other commodities become profitable. Bananas owed their placement in the Costa Rican economy to coffee. Strong coffee exports enticed the tropical nation to develop large-scale transportation of its premier product. In the late 19th century, Costa Rican officials decided to establish railways between coffee producing regions and the Atlantic coast to facilitate shipping.⁴³ After several stalled attempts, the Caribbean nation's government persuaded U.S. entrepreneur Minor Keith to complete the project. To sweeten the deal, the Costa Rican government gave exclusive land use rights to Keith for all land along the route. In order to make some use of the lands he was given, Keith planted banana trees along the route and thus stumbled upon a pervasive exportable product for the entire country while simultaneously having the means to transport it.

Unlike coffee production, however, the banana industry's beginnings with foreign investors meant that financial gain from the produce was fed back to foreign nations. Foreign investment wedged firmly into the national structure for banana trade. Monies earned from bananas that did not go directly to foreign governments, were largely kept in an isolated "country within a country." The shipping company owned and operated by Keith established its own schools, communities, hospitals, and immigrant flow, all of which was under the control of Keith's firms.⁴⁴ A strong national armed service would

⁴³ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

have been bad for Keith and investors like him and would have created a separate standard for citizenry.

Again, Porter's stage theory provides a modern lens for examination. The second stage of the Porter model is the Investment-Driven stage. Under stage two, "The products and services produced become more sophisticated, but technology and designs still largely come from abroad."⁴⁵ Foreign investment in technology definitely advanced Costa Rican output, but problematically the banana industry by and large did not pay Costa Rican taxes for the first few decades of its existence.⁴⁶ Without paying into the state they were profiting from, foreign investors simulated extractive colonial practices that are more harmful to the host nation than mutually beneficial. Moreover, the foreign owned United Fruit Company privately held approximately a quarter of the land used in banana production by 1932.⁴⁷ So not only were companies like the United Fruit Company not paying taxes, they were trapping land that could otherwise have been used to strengthen their host nation. This disparity in business growth and national growth turned what should have been a national boon into a windfall for foreign investors.

The detrimental effects on Costa Rica's economy caused by quasi-extraction policies of foreign investors spilled over into the Costa Rican government. During the time that the United Fruit Company was capitalizing on Costa Rican output, Costa Rican politicians were doing much of the same and using their relationships with foreign investors, and their pull in public works projects, to provide jobs in exchange for political support. In their book, *Stuff the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica*, Fabrice Lehoucq and Ivan Molina point to a Costa Rican anti-corruption bill that notes, "We vote for this or that candidate because he is our friend; because he will give us the job we seek; because he will place this or that relative...and not as it should be, for the best interests of the fatherland."⁴⁸ Thus, foreign

⁴⁵ Porter, "Enhancing the Microeconomic Foundations of Prosperity," 8.

⁴⁶ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 26.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 67.

⁴⁸ Fabrice Lehoucq and Ivan Molina, *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica* (Cambridge University Press: 2002), 39.

investors and sly politicians worked together to propagate a patrimonial system of quid pro quo.

Minor Keith's United Fruit Company (UFC) also used immigrant labor on fruit plantations and further rooted his "country within a country" via segregation from the rest of Costa Rican society. The UFC entrenched itself into Costa Rican society while simultaneously avoiding attachment to it. By way of entrenchment, Minor Keith actually married the daughter of then Costa Rican President Jose Maria Castro Madriz. A demonstration of the lack of attachment is obvious when looking at a government commission on UFC practices. In 1934, congress commissioned an inspection of the conditions of banana plantations: "The findings left the commission with no doubt as to the 'inhuman, unhealthful, and careless treatment' to which the United Fruit Company subjected its agricultural laborers."⁴⁹

Costa Rica was well off when compared to most other Latin American nations of the same era, but only in comparison and only the majority of citizens. These terrible working conditions became more of a political issue for several reasons. First, the U.S. was greatly benefiting from the fruit export, which by this time had grown to be second only to coffee in terms of trade. The growing communist sentiments, though still not a majority, were able to point to horrid working conditions on UFC plantations as proof of U.S. exploitation. Second, economically comfortable Costa Ricans were afforded the luxury of social awareness on labor force issues. This awareness caused those able to exert some pressures on the Costa Rican government. Last, the Costa Rican manual labor force was, and is still today, largely not Costa Rican. Foreign-born immigrants were used for the least desirable manual labor occupations, "with the most desirable positions reserved for white foreigners."⁵⁰

The segregation of workers onto plantations, and the further class structure based on color, promoted ideas that the UFC, and thus U.S. capitalism, was a blight on egalitarian society. Though much of the critique given to Minor Keith and the UFC was

⁴⁹ Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica*, 25.

⁵⁰Ibid.

warranted, it was also largely tongue and cheek. John Booth remarks that, “After United Fruit moved its operations to the Pacific Coast in the 1930s, taking with it most of the Atlantic region’s employment, blacks were prohibited from migrating to follow the jobs,” showing that the Tico government was a willing party to the segregation established by foreign entities.⁵¹ Incidentally, the foreign-born workers employed by Keith established a template that is still pervasive. Today, approximately 9% of Costa Rica’s population is foreign born, occupy unskilled labor positions, and lag behind Costa Rican citizens in human development because of the isolated nature of immigrant worker communities.⁵²

In the final years of the 20th century, the Costa Rican economy began to fall victim to some of the perils its international peers have long experienced. According to professor Fabrice Lehoucq, the Tico deficit “ballooned as high as 96% before falling below 60% again in 1992.”⁵³ Even so, because there is no military, there is increased incentive to correct the poor economy through policies and politics rather than overthrow the government. Lehoucq explains that, “there will be no military coup because the 1949 constitution bans a standing army, and more importantly, because the vast majority of Costa Ricans reject violence as a means of settling political disputes.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ John A. Booth, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1998), 86.

⁵² “The World Factbook: Costa Rica,” Central Intelligence Agency, accessed 30 January 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>.

⁵³ Fabrice Lehoucq, “Paradise in doubt,” *Journal of Democracy*, 3, no. 16 (July 2005), 150.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

IV. DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT

The presence or relative strength of a national military force can be a benefit to national security and human development, or create a pitfall for social growth. In Latin America, history has shown the former to be a much more likely outcome of an armed government body. Part of Costa Rica's option to remove a standing army from its social structure was an effort to increase its capacity for further domestic development. In general, pro-development contentions against state-run forces can be categorized as: military coups, dictatorial regimes, and social advancement.

A. MILITARY COUPS

Former Costa Rican President and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Oscar Arias Sanchez suggests that a national standing army presents a roadblock to civil rest. Arias wrote that "In the worst [scenario], [Latin American armies] have been a permanent trap for our democracies."⁵⁵ Over the past two centuries, Latin America has been plagued by revolutions sparked by political unrest and punctuated by military coups. Between its break from the Spanish crown in the 1820s and the constitution of 1949, Costa Rica, even with a historically weak army, went through 11 military coups and at least as many violent revolts.⁵⁶

Since 1949, Central and South America have collectively had 42 coups or attempted coups, while Costa Rica has had none. Poignantly, Arias notes that when Haiti got rid of its military, it "ended an eternal string of coups" itself.⁵⁷ While the existence of a standing army does not preclude the creation of a stable democracy, in Costa Rica's view the threat such an army poses to political stability is too great to warrant its maintenance.

⁵⁵ Oscar Arias Sanchez, "Costa Rica's Arias calls on Uruguay's Pepe to Disband Army," *Latin American Herald Tribune*, accessed 10 August 2015, <http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=355947&CategoryId=23620>.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 23.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

From 1890 to 1948, “at least four unsuccessful coup attempts and eleven revolts against the government took place.”⁵⁸ There was so much internal discord that between 1835 and 1949 that the Costa Rican Constitution was re-written eight times. After a successful military coup in 1859, military members “did not themselves assume the presidency, but kept the head of the state so much under their control that often his authority almost ceased to exist.”⁵⁹ The military’s self-imposed restriction on holding direct power did not last long. In 1870, Costa Rican Colonel Tomas Guardia began a 12-year rule over the Caribbean nation that is simultaneously respected and detested. T. Guardia’s dictatorship is appreciated for his advocacy of education and advancements in trade. Conversely, he is disparaged for his imposed limits on democratic processes, detrimental budget practices, and the hording of executive power.⁶⁰

Internal threats to Costa Rica’s security came primarily from two sources and neutralizing its own military effectively mitigated both. First, Costa Rica had to contend (much like other Central American and Latin American nations) with the possibility of a coup spurred from one section or another of the social strata due to inequality or disenfranchisement. Besides eliminating the military as a tool to be used by opposition powers, the threat of alienating the populace could be helped by introducing social programs and taking steps to unite all classes by using funds otherwise accounted for in military spending. Jose Figueres Ferrer, the post-revolution president who abolished the military, had the luxury of molding this new style of government without the threat of military upheaval since he himself employed the strongest force in the country.

The second threat was far more sinister, as it came from the instigation of civil unrest from an exterior country. The failed U.S. attempt at fomenting internal revolution in Cuba with the disastrous Bay of Pigs fiasco is an example of the second internal threat of coups. Like the first, this second threat of internal conflict was best overcome by having no state forces at all. Third-party forces, or mercenaries like the Caribbean Legion

⁵⁸ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 23.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

employed by Figueres, count on the patronage of a specific leader rather than staking loyalty to a perceived threat to social justice or class standing.

With respect to the first source of civil dysfunction, Costa Rican realized that, in contrast to the rarity of foreign encroachment, genuine social unrest was a common occurrence in Latin America. When the 1948 civil war took place, the incumbent leadership was protected by the state-military, who proved to be ineffectual against the revolutionary forces. The revolutionary forces on the other hand were not state forces at all, but a hired group of mercenaries, a privatized army, employed by the Costa Rican exile Figueres. When Figueres was firmly in place as Costa Rica's new leader, one of his first actions was to disband the defeated national army before they had the chance to regroup and counter-attack. Figueres kept his private army on his payroll as protection. When the new Costa Rican constitution was ratified, it included a clause that formally abolished the military. Figueres deftly avoided a military challenge to his legitimacy and erected a roadblock to future violent revolts against the government that he helped create.

The second source of internal turmoil is very close to the first and differs only in that it is instigated via foreign powers. Costa Rica understood that, historically, civil revolts are largely the product of elite interests meshing with military control. By the early 1960s, Central American elites controlled the vast majority commercial lands. Landed elites in Guatemala owned only 3.7% of the farms, but grew 68% of agriculture, or roughly 18 times more than proportionally just. The numbers in Honduras (2.4% of farms occupied 48% of land), Nicaragua (11% of farms took up 73% of land) and El Salvador (7.3% of farms covered 83% of land) were equally as telling.⁶¹ Though elites and their families controlled these lands, foreign (usually U.S.) companies made them lucrative. Political theorists Skidmore and Smith observe that the elite class in Latin America wanted to attract foreign investments, so it was to their benefit to produce at least the guise of order in their countries using whatever means necessary.⁶² If doing so

⁶¹ PACCA, *Changing Course: Blueprint for Peace in Central America and the Caribbean* (Washington DC: The Institute of Policy Studies, 1984), 18.

⁶² Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin American*, 46.

meant going along with an extra-nationally instigated revolution (a charge that has been leveled at the United States on more than one occasion) so be it.

One example of civil unrest leading to military facilitated bloodshed was the so-called “Coffee Coup” in 1917. In light of economic hardships caused by the First World War, Costa Rica’s government attempted to restructure the nation’s tax system in such a way that the elite class paid more. The upper class “led a military coup at the behest of the coffee oligarchy, removing President Gonzalez Flores and reasserting the oligarchy’s economic and political hegemony.”⁶³ The coffee coup in 1917 installed military leader Federico Tinoco as a dictator. In keeping with the ever-present threat of military upheaval, Tinoco was himself removed from power just 18 months later by yet another coup. Tinoco’s ouster was an internal effort by Costa Ricans, but the international pressures exerted by the United States clearly had an effect.

When Tinoco took power, the Ticos’ greatest trade partner was the United States. Under President Woodrow Wilson, the U.S. had just affected a new policy in which non-elected governments would not be recognized. Global Politics professor Kirk Bowman observes that regardless of Tinoco’s attempts to appease the United States like “supporting U.S. foreign policy and his declaration on the side of the United States in World War I, the holding of elections, the support of U.S. State Department and business support” the new policy was unyielding, and with U.S. support Tinoco was removed from power.⁶⁴

The Coffee Coup was a watershed moment in Costa Rica for three reasons; first, it demonstrated the power of the elite class, even in a society that prides itself on egalitarian rhetoric. Without the existence of an internal social structure that allowed one tier to manipulate the military, there would have been no coup. Second, the outcome of the coup showed in no uncertain terms that the United States would wield its influence in multiple areas in order to steer the course of foreign politics effectively. This second

⁶³ Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 46.

⁶⁴ Kirk Bowman, “Militaries and Modern States: The Comparative Evidence from Costa Rica and Honduras,” in *Demilitarization in the Contemporary World*, ed. Peter Stearns (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 189.

reason would surface again and again throughout the history of Latin America; Costa Rica's abolition of a military was a pre-emptive guard against the type of U.S. influence that sparked internal revolts that used national forces. Last, the Coffee Coup would have been impossible without coordination of the elites with high-ranking military personnel who differed in opinion from the government and saw their loyalties not to the state, but to their assumed class. The question became how to honor the military professional as a respected and valued member of society, but see that his allegiance was to country over class. One answer was to eliminate the profession all together and in doing so remove the possibility of a professional soldier turning on their government.

The threat of a military seizure of power was so great that the final coup that led to the dissolution of the military was conducted by a collection of private fighters who owed their allegiance to one man's ideal, were paid by his coffers, and were disbanded after his use had expired. Jose Figueres Ferrer kept his private army, The Caribbean Legion, at his service even after drafting the constitutional supplement that rid the nation of its own armed forces until he was sure they were no longer needed. By defeating Costa Rica's army, maintaining the means required to ensure it stayed absent, then engineering a legal institutional that was incompatible with military service, Figueres maneuvered his country into a position that would continue on without a military long after he was gone.

B. ANTI-COMMUNISM

On the occasions where U.S. support was not assured, the Central American oligarchies and economic elites learned how to ensure America's aid. The Institute for Policy Studies, a Washington, D.C., based think-tank, asserts that, "the oligarchies have learned to shout 'communism' at the merest whisper of reform, thereby linking their own survival to U.S. national security."⁶⁵ Almost this exact scenario came to fruition with the last Costa Rican civil war in 1948. The presumptive president of the old regime running for re-election, Calderon Guardia, was labeled a communist to resounding success by his opposition.

⁶⁵ PACCA, *Changing Course: Blueprint for Peace in Central America and the Caribbean*, 18.

The threat of communism was only just beginning by the time the OAS charter was ratified, also in 1948, but the “red scare” had already gained so much traction in the U.S. that any perceived connection to communism would be seen as a threat to American national security and was enough to warrant U.S. action. Doctrine and treaties of non-interference made any overt intervention politically unlikely but covert action led by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) became ubiquitous in the region. An example of a U.S. sponsored coup was the overthrow of the (democratically elected no less) leader of Guatemala, President Jacobo Arbenz.⁶⁶ Removing Arbenz was not just an issue of government preference, but also economic interests. The United Fruit Company fought hard for the president’s ouster, and eventually the U.S. used his supposed ties to communism to empty his seat.

In the case of Costa Rica, because the charges of communism were leveled, shouted, and repeated against President Raphael Calderon Guardia with such alacrity that the accusations stuck, and the United States recalled its ambassador and removed support for pro-Guardia entities. By doing so, it fed the accusations.⁶⁷ Even if the United States did not send troops or aid in the government’s overthrow overtly, America’s silence on the issue was deafening, and provided an equally effective method for delegitimizing foreign governments. Thus, rather than military encroachment from a rival and neighboring country, Costa Rica realized that the most likely threat of military overthrow would be from an internal invasion of sorts, instigated by the United States.

The Cuban missile crisis added validity to U.S. concerns about the communist menace and renewed its vigor to stamping out communism in the Western Hemisphere. Abolishing the military helped Costa Rica’s newly placed government in the short term, but it was the realization that a communist threat did not exist without a military force that helped solidify the concept. Though Costa Rica did have its fair share of communist sympathizers, a military free nation made for an unlikely enemy to the regional super power and further protected Tico leadership.

⁶⁶ PACCA, *Changing Course: Blueprint for Peace in Central America and the Caribbean*, 20.

⁶⁷ Bowman, “Militaries and Modern States,” 195.

C. DICTATORIAL REGIMES

In his letter to the Uruguayan president, Arias stated directly that, “It was the military boot that trampled human rights in our regions. It was the general’s voice that issued the most violent arrest warrants for students and artists. It was the hand of the soldier who fired into the back of innocent people.”⁶⁸ Though President Arias is not equating the military to oppression, he is clearly making the correlation between the two.

To Costa Ricans, the existence of a standing army is an ever-present threat against civil liberties. Rather than reorganize the military into a subservient position, a tactic employed by regional peers like El Salvador and Guatemala with only limited success, the Costa Rican solution for an overzealous armed service was its complete dissipation.

Though human rights violations in Costa Rica were few and far between, the nation is no stranger to dictatorships. Of the 25 Costa Rican presidents before 1890, seven were overthrown through military force, “six became interim presidents after the resignation of the incumbent, and eleven presidents took office following indirect, noncompetitive elections.”⁶⁹

The instillation of a dictator was often accomplished with foreign aid for financial gain. Foreign investments in Central America were vital to the growth of businesses specializing in fruit, shipping, exporting, and the like. Skidmore and Smith distinguish between two forms of elite power grabs, “In one version, landowners and other economic elites took direct control of the government—as in Argentina and Chile. They sought to build strong, exclusive regimes, usually with military support, often proclaiming legitimacy through adherence to constitutions strongly resembling U.S. and European democratic models” while the second form “involved the imposition of dictatorial strongmen, often military officers, to assert law and order—again, for the ultimate benefit of the landed elites.”⁷⁰ With social elites in control of U.S. economic interests, the

⁶⁸ Oscar Arias Sanchez, “Costa Rica’s Arias Calls on Uruguay’s Pepe to Disband Army,” *Latin American Herald Tribune*.

⁶⁹ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 20.

⁷⁰ Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 46.

standard operating procedure was for the United States to stand with the ruling elites in matters of civil upheaval.

D. SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

President Arias and his predecessors suggest that by doing away with their nation's military, the money that would be spent on tanks and jets is instead spent on investments in human capital. To Uruguay's president, Arias wrote "In the best of scenarios, the Latin American armies have meant a prohibitive expense for our economies."⁷¹ In particular, the two human capital areas of education and healthcare deepen and improve the pool of national workers, which makes their country more competitive in liberal markets. Comparing Costa Rica's investments in education and healthcare to its neighbors and examining how each nation fairs economically, seems to validate President Arias's claims.

Arias's contention, that the nation has a better chance to educate its people in the absence of a military, is evidenced by his country's comparatively high literacy rate of 97.8%, the highest in the region and well above the global average of approximately 85%. Likewise, Costa Rica's universities are internationally respected and accredited.⁷² Costa Rica's concern with the education of its human capital is highlighted through the nation's highest legal institution, its constitution. Article 78 of the Costa Rican constitution asserts that, "preschool education and general basic education are compulsory. These levels and the diversified education level are, in the public system, free and supported by the Nation."⁷³ Not only is education esteemed enough to warrant protection by constitutional mandate but the constitution goes a step further and allocates

⁷¹ Oscar Arias Sanchez, "Costa Rica's Arias calls on Uruguay's Pepe to Disband Army," *Latin American Herald Tribune*.

⁷² Costa Rica, Costa Rican Educational system, accessed 7 Dec 2015, <http://costarica.com/relocation/costa-ricas-education-system/>

⁷³ Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica, Title VII, Article 78, accessed 5 Dec 2015, http://www.therealcostarica.com/government/costa_rica/constitution/costa_rica.html#7/.

funds for its affects. The Costa Rican constitution requires that no less than 6% of the nation's GDP be spent on education.⁷⁴

The top down mandate for education, and the requirement that the government provide for its people, highlight the national stance on the importance of schooling. Moreover, the relatively high percentage of GDP spent on education lends credibility to the former president's claim that the lack of a military allows funds to be spent on human development. Though the constitution only requires 6% be spent on education, the actual number in 2013 was 6.9%.⁷⁵ By comparison, the United States, the world's largest consumer of military goods, spent just 5.2% of its own GDP on education in 2012 while spending 4.75% on the military.⁷⁶ If the U.S. were to follow the advice of President Arias, the abolition of a military could more than make up the difference in educational spending.

More relevant to the region, the other six Central American nations average only 4.1% of their GDPs on educational spending, about 40% less than what Costa Rica spends.⁷⁷ Correspondingly, Guatemala, the nation with the lowest regional literacy rate (81.5%), also spent the least with only 2.8% of its GDP allocated for schooling.⁷⁸ Costa Rica spends the largest portion of its wealth on education and can boast the highest literacy rate in the region, even beating the relatively new nation of Panama.

Though not added to its constitution, Costa Rica's "General Health Law" insists that: 1) Good public health is in the best interest of the nation 2) An essential function of the state is to provide healthcare for its people and, 3) Healthcare is a right of all legal inhabitants of Costa Rica.⁷⁹ The establishment of this General Health Law makes it clear

⁷⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica, Title VII, Article 78, accessed 5 Dec 2015.

⁷⁵ "The World Factbook: Costa Rica," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed 30 January 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "The World Factbook: Central America.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Sistema Costarricense de Informacion Juridica: Ley General de Salud," accessed 3 Dec 2015, http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=6581&nValor3=96425&strTipM=TC.

that the Tico government firmly believes that a healthy state improves their nation's ability to compete in the international free-market system. As with the educational comparison, when contrasted against Costa Rica the other six nations of the isthmus lag in healthcare. Monetarily, Costa Rica allots funds toward universal healthcare that would otherwise presumably go toward national defense. According to the CIA's World Factbook, in 2012, Central America averaged 15.7% of GDP on healthcare.⁸⁰ Costa Rica nearly doubles that with approximately 29% of its GDP dedicated to its healthcare system.⁸¹ Further supporting Arias's claim, *Forbes* magazine noted that, "poor health costs the U.S. economy \$576 billion a year, of that amount 39%, or \$227 billion is from lost productivity."⁸² Caring for the health of its citizens and labor force makes any nation more economically competitive.

Education and healthcare serve as two examples of how the state can invest in its human capital and they reinforce President Arias's claims that without a military, the nation is more able to support economic growth. Arias says "the money we used to destine to our armies, we now destine for the education of our children, the health of our citizens, and the competitiveness of our industries and businesses."⁸³ These investments distinguish Costa Rica from the rest of the world but especially the other nations in its region.

Taking into account total GDP, Costa Rica not only outspends its peers on education and healthcare from a percentage standpoint, but in raw dollars as well. In 2012, Costa Rica spent approximately \$4.89 billion on education and just over \$20.5 billion on healthcare. No other Central American nation comes close to the level of financial commitment Costa Rica has invested in its human capital and it appears to be paying off for the Ticos. While neither the largest country in Central America nor the

⁸⁰ "The World Factbook: Central America.

⁸¹ Ibid., Costa Rica.

⁸² Bruce Japsen, "U.S. Workforce Illness Costs \$576B Annually from Sick Days to Workers Compensation," *Forbes*, accessed 12 Dec 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/brucejapsen/2012/09/12/u-s-workforce-illness-costs-576b-annually-from-sick-days-to-workers-compensation/>.

⁸³ Oscar Arias Sanchez, "Costa Rica's Arias calls on Uruguay's Pepe to Disband Army," *Latin American Herald Tribune*.

most populous, Costa Rica still enjoys the second highest per capita GDP (PPP) with \$14,900, just behind that of Panama, which is the only nation on the planet that controls the water route linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.⁸⁴ Even without such a cash cow in shipping, Costa Rica has managed to diversify its economy from commodities into tourism and most recently into personal computing. Interestingly, the Central American country that spends the greatest portion of its wealth on the military, Belize, also has the lowest GDP.⁸⁵

A comparison of the poverty headcount for Costa Rica with the rest of Central America supports President Arias's point as well. The percentage of the population that lives below the poverty line in Costa Rica, according to the World Trade Organization (WTO), is 22.4%.⁸⁶ Though having nearly a quarter of the population living in poverty is normatively a shameful state of affairs, Costa Rica still leads the way in the region, which (of reporting nations) averages over 39%.⁸⁷ Even Panama, has a poverty headcount higher than that of Costa Rica. It is worth noting that the two most prosperous nations in Central America, Costa Rica and Panama, have abolished their militaries. Panama dissolved its military almost five decades after Costa Rica and did so at the urging of its protectorate, The United States of America.

Economically, Costa Rica and Panama, were motivated to shed their military institutions because they rationalized that their geographic location would ensure U.S. protection. The Panama Canal is a keystone of U.S. strategic interests. Author and Historian, Ivan Musicant's book, *The Banana Wars*, places national strategy at the front of U.S.–Central American dealings. Musicant says of the causes for intervention, "In the main, these came on the back of the overriding strategic consideration, specifically the need to create a Caribbean bulwark shielding the Atlantic approaches to America's

⁸⁴ "The World Factbook: Costa Rica," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed 30 January 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>.

⁸⁵ "The World Factbook: Belize," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed 30 January 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>.

⁸⁶ "The World Bank: Costa Rica", accessed 10 Dec 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/costa-rica>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

hemispheric jugular vein, the isthmus and canal of Panama.”⁸⁸ Because of U.S. interests, unrest that threatened the security of the region, especially of a nation that bordered the canal, would demand attention. Therefore, the economic interests of foreign nations, like the United States and Panama, support actions that stabilize the region. Costa Rica’s abolition of its military did indeed stabilize the region though the United States was unimpressed with this tactic for doing so.

⁸⁸ Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1990), 1.

V. EXTERNAL THREATS

Conventional paradigms for national security reckon that guarding a nation against foreign forces is a primary job of the military; however, if the nation has no reasonable expectation of invasion, that premise for fielding national forces falls. Costa Rica has two main considerations for external threats, regional threats from historically adverse countries, and extra-regional threats from hostile nations. If foreign invasion from either case is unlikely, then a standing army is unnecessary and it is possible to re-appropriate the resources that would otherwise be set aside for a military. The concept of a post-modern military asserts that, one key difference between Modern and Postmodern societies lies in the character of the threats they face and the ways they perceive them.⁸⁹

A. REGIONAL THREATS

Commonly, one of the most violent eras in a nation's history is when that nation declares independence from the colonizing power. However, in Costa Rica, the split from the Spanish crown was relatively tame as there was no violence directly between Spain and Costa Rica. Prior to achieving total independence, Costa Rica, along with the rest of Spain's Central American colonies, achieved a joint Independence.

To be sure, there were violent interactions between the newly formed nations. Questions about how to proceed were turbulent, argumentative, and at times bloody. Mexico attempted to unite the region under the flag of a new empire and while the idea of uniting with Mexico appealed to some Costa Ricans, it revolted others. The rift between the two perspectives erupted in the first Costa Rican Civil War. The war lasted only days and was made irrelevant when Mexico abandoned its plans for a Central American Empire.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Charles Moskos, "Armed Forces After the Cold War," in *The Post Modern Military*, eds. Charles Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16.

⁹⁰ Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 18.

Following Mexico's attempt, the five nations of Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, met in Guatemala to establish a federation of free states. This federation was fully ratified by 1824 and lasted longer than days, but only in name. The Central American Federation (CAF) was rife with bickering and small-scale battles erupted as early as 1825. The battles were financed by British banks, which would almost certainly go unpaid, causing tension between London and the new republics.⁹¹ In 1838, Costa Rica made steps to fully divorce itself from the CAF, but like the fastidious separation from Spain, did not declare full independence until 1848.⁹² The infighting, limited though it was, that surrounded an otherwise peaceful independence only aggravated a precariously stable region.

Since declaring complete independence from the CAF in 1848, Costa Rica had about 100 years without foreign wars, and even then the contended invasion was from exiled Costa Rican Jose Figueres Ferrer who, in 1948, returned home to take power and establish the current government enjoyed today. If the peaceful nation does find itself in need of protection against invasion, its partnership with other military powers will suffice for defense.

Nicaragua poses the greatest potential military threat to Costa Rica. Even so, Nicaragua is unlikely to act out because of a complex political house of cards. Nicaraguan President Jose Zelaya renewed the idea of a united Central America, and envisioned himself as its ruler. Varying Central American state forces like Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras were strong enough to impede Zelaya's ambitions and he knew it, but Nicaragua's military was far stronger than that of Costa Rica. Costa Rica, unlike the other countries did not have the means to fight against Zelaya and was too small and isolated to affect the military formula against Zelaya. Consolidating Central America would likely start with attacking Nicaragua's southern neighbor who would have fallen

⁹¹ Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 18.

⁹² Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean*, 21.

like a “ripe apple into the basket.”⁹³ Two things stopped Zelaya from acting out his plans of regional unification beginning with the annexation of Costa Rica.

First, attacking Costa Rica would start off a series of military conflicts with neighboring nations coming to its defense. In 1906, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras signed a “General Treaty of Peace and Amity, Arbitration, Commerce, Etc.” aboard the U.S. Naval cruiser, The *Marblehead*, that codified their dedication to peace with each other and the maintenance of peace in the region as a whole.⁹⁴ More, by signing the accord aboard a U.S. war ship, the signatories were able to send a clear message of the severity of their intent with the support of the hemispheric hegemon. The *Marblehead* treaty dedicates the signatories to peace via “the preservation of such friendship, by endeavoring to contribute every means to procure the desired end, and to remove as far as lies in their power, any obstacles, whatever their nature, which might prevent it.”⁹⁵ Nicaragua was invited to join the treaty and declined, likely because of its president’s plans of conquest. If Zelaya wanted to succeed in conquering and reuniting Central America, he would have to start with a more powerful nation, gain control of that nation’s military, then commandeer Costa Rica.

What stopped Zelaya from attacking any other Central American nation was the second and more important issue at hand, U.S. presence on Central American soil. From the end of the Spanish American War in 1898 until the initiation of the “Good Neighbor Policy” in 1933, the U.S. dedicated itself to several initiatives in Central America to further its own interests. These initiatives were nicknamed “The Banana Wars” and mark an era of U.S. military involvement on behalf of economic, socio-political, and strategic gain. Between the start of the Banana Wars and the implementation of the Good Neighbor Policy, the U.S. “sent troops on 28 separate occasions into Central America and the Caribbean” including “Nicaragua in 1894, 1896, 1898 and twice in 1899.”⁹⁶

⁹³ James N. & Jams W. Cortada, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Caribbean, Cuba, and Central America*, 54.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 209.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ PACCA, *Changing Course: Blueprint for Peace in Central America and the Caribbean*, 19.

Though Nicaragua was often the most vocal in its claims against U.S. involvement in regional policy, the U.S. presence in Central America and the Caribbean was by no means limited to operations in Nicaragua. One of the most permanent impacts America had on Central America was the establishment of Panama as an independent nation. Until 1903, Panama was part of Colombia, but “on November 3, 1903, Panama, with the blessings of the United States, declared its independence from Colombia, and the way was cleared for the construction of the canal following a treaty between the United States and Panama signed on November 18, 1903.”⁹⁷ So it is clear that the U.S. would act aggressively to protect its regional interests, up to and including supporting armed revolutions against nations it felt were problematic.

As stated before, both Panama and Costa Rica benefit from their geographic proximity to U.S. strategic keystone, the Panama Canal. President Arias tacitly acknowledged U.S. protect when he said that “In truth I tell you that there has been no decision that has strengthened the Costa Rican national security more, than to eliminate the army.”⁹⁸ No army means no way for the U.S. to exploit an internal army for rebellion, no means by which to pose a military threat to neighbors, and the requirement for the hemispheric hegemon to provide military support to ensure the protection of its interests.

Traditionally, a state’s professional soldiers exist for the protection of the nation’s borders against external threats. In Costa Rica’s case, the military’s reason for existence faced two defining chasms. First, the military’s existence was on dubious ground from the start since, despite having disputes with neighbors, there were no perennial regional threats. Costa Rica has had far more internal conflicts than external skirmishes. More to the point, all of Central America shares at least some modicum of vision that their isthmus can be united into a peaceful coalition. To be clear, the ideal of uniting all of Central America existed even before its split from Spain in 1824. Simon Bolivar, in 1815, remarked that,

⁹⁷ James N. & Jams W. Cortada, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Caribbean, Cuba, and Central America*, 42.

⁹⁸ Oscar Arias Sanchez, “Costa Rica’s Arias calls on Uruguay’s Pepe to Disband Army,” *Latin American Herald Tribune*.

The state in the isthmus of Panama, as far as Guatemala, will form perhaps an association. This magnificent position between the two oceans may become in time the world's emporium; its canals shall shorten the earth's distances, tighten the commercial ties of Europe, America and Asia, there will be brought to so fortunate a region tributes from the four corners of the globe.⁹⁹

Despite earlier failed attempts at regional consolidation, there is still pacific intent among the nations in Central America that has presented as trade pacts, eased immigration restrictions, and created one of the most internationally peaceful regions in the world. Thus, Costa Rica has never had regional enemies from which it needs protection and no ill will or colonial desires for its neighbors that require an expeditionary force. The second chasm between the nation and a military was the evolution of warfare caused by two cataclysmic events: The end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War.

B. EXTRA-REGIONAL THREATS

World War II ended in dramatic fashion when the United States became the first nation to successfully employ an atomic weapon in war. As a Great Power, the U.S. military is one of only a handful of nations that controls global circumstances beyond its immediate area.¹⁰⁰ One of the reasons for this classification is its military's strength, due in large part to the nuclear arsenal that America began amassing at the end of WWII.

Dropping weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked a turning point in the nature of war. From that point on, the strength of a military, the strength of coalitions, or a population's willingness to fight could all be rendered moot by a single weapon. Costa Rica, like other nations, refocused their national security strategy in response to this shift. Most nations could never realistically compete in the nuclear age with their limited forces. Indeed, Arias used this very rationale, of an insurmountable security dilemma, to extol the virtues of shedding a military. In his letter to the Uruguayan president, Arias

⁹⁹ James N. & Jams W. Cortada, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Caribbean, Cuba, and Central America*, 103.

¹⁰⁰ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations 2006 – 2007 ed.* (Boston: Pearson, 2006), 78.

said, “Uruguay cannot win an arms race against Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Chile and Venezuela.” Though Arias was directing his observations at Uruguay, he could just as easily have been referring to his own nation.

At the same time that the international community began to understand the implications of nuclear war, America’s rival and the Eastern Hemisphere’s hegemon, Russia, began to build its own nuclear weapons cache. The list of nuclear-armed countries in the early years of the Cold War doubled from just the United States to include the Soviet Union. Demonstrating the exclusivity of having a nuclear arsenal at one’s disposal, even today more than 60 years after the first nuclear weapon was dropped, only five nation-states are recognized as nuclear powers by the United Nations and none are in Latin America.

At the end of the Cold War, the bi-polar nature of the conflict required that nations pick a side in the potentially catastrophic competition between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. By continuing its demilitarized strategy, Costa Rica chose a side, but with a large caveat of having nothing to contribute militarily should the unthinkable happen and World War III begin.

The United States was not supportive of Costa Rica’s abolition of its military because of what this would mean in the grander scheme of Cold War alignment strategy. To the U.S., the lack of a physical force to combat the spread of communism on the Western Hemisphere was unwise. In response to Costa Rica’s new policy, the United States began to exert pressure on the Tico government to re-build its armed forces. According to Costa Rican politician and former ambassador to the United States, Gonzalo Facio, “We received great pressure from the United States so that we would form a modern army here. They wanted to give us equipment and training and everything. We said no.”¹⁰¹

Instead of using its own military to combat the supposed threat of communism, the Tico government reasoned that economic support, like the kind it gave during the first

¹⁰¹ Bowman, *Demilitarization*, 195.

two world wars, would suffice against an enemy. More, Costa Rica had long used international treaties to ensure international peace within its own region, as with the *Marblehead* Treaty already discussed. The *Marblehead* Treaty exemplifies the kind of nation that Costa Rica wanted to become and how it configured its strategic partnerships. To the Ticos, war should be the absolute last attempt to regain control. Also, since the late 1800s, Western Hemisphere nations had collaborated in sharing ideals and peaceful resolution of conflicts with one another, laying the groundwork for what would be the formalized institution: The Organization of American States (OAS). Part of the OAS agreement was that an attack against any nation in the collective would constitute an attack against the whole. The OAS was officially charted in 1948, the year before Costa Rica officially purged its military.¹⁰² Figueres certainly did not make his decision in a vacuum and would have considered protections garnered by the signing of the OAS charter when deciding what to do with his nation's army.

In 1949, when Costa Rica unsaddled itself of a military, it also relieved itself of the burden of building up arms, dedicating its citizens to fighting for or against Great Power nations, and perpetuating a hostile posture against its neighbors. To Uruguayan President Jose Mujica Cordano, Arias wrote of the futility of trying to match weapons with stronger powers and was speaking from experience gained from leading such a nation rather than hopeful optimism.

¹⁰² The Organization of American States, accessed 9 Dec 2015, http://www.oas.org/en/about/our_history.asp.

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VI. ALTERNATIVES TO STANDING ARMIES

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan invited President Arias to the White House in an effort to influence the reformation of the Costa Rican army. Among the many deriding comments aimed at the small nation, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, told the Ticos that their country “Is not a viable country, because it has no military.”¹⁰³ Three and a half decades are evidence to the contrary, that Costa Rica is indeed a viable nation. Yet, the main issue of contention between Kirkpatrick’s point of view and that of the Ticos lies in each party’s notion of the acceptable use of military.

President Arias and his predecessors understood that a robust police force can replace a military for all domestic issues. This chapter will detail uses of militaries in other-than-war activities, describe the methods some states have taken to demilitarize, and discuss civilian security apparatuses that substitute for military forces in Costa Rica.

A. MILITARY OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR

For nations that wish to curtail the power of their armies, having a military at all becomes a slippery slope. States that have attempted to slowly demilitarize by downsizing their army but keeping a small national armed service, have encountered multiple problems. For example, in 1992 El Salvador participated in UN led Peace Accords that aimed at shrinking the national forces and increasing the number of civilian police. El Salvador’s once powerful military dragged its feet in the process taking years longer to complete than intended. To the nation’s credit, the Salvadorian military had downsized by more than 64%, shedding over 28,000 personnel by 2009.¹⁰⁴ Problematically, despite its lessened manpower, El Salvador’s military still held sway over national dealings in a manner incommensurate with its size. Professors Williams and Ruhl, in the work *Demilitarization in the Contemporary World*, observe that the military

¹⁰³ Bowman, *Demilitarization*, 185.

¹⁰⁴ Philip J Williams and Mark Ruhl, “Demilitarization after Central American Civil Wars,” in *Demilitarization in the Contemporary World*, ed. Peter Stearns (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 221.

still controlled institutions like: “The National Telecommunications Administration, the National Administration of Water and Aqueducts, the General Directorate of Land and Transport, the General Director of Statistics and Census, the Port Authority, the Postal Service and Customs.”¹⁰⁵ Further, the military used its control of national institutions to maneuver for budget considerations despite its diminished size. Stripping the military of power requires much more than shrinking its number or even its budget.

Guatemala has had similar experiences with demilitarization. Left leaning Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom was expected to weaken his nation’s army and rely more on civilian police forces. Instead, President Colom found that the uniquely violent security risks inside Guatemala could be handled best by the military. In a move unpopular with his supporters, Mr. Colom increased the military’s size and budget.¹⁰⁶ In Guatemala, once the military had established itself as a powerful anti-crime force, retraining or re-tasking other agencies would have been a time consuming and unwieldy endeavor. It was easier and faster for President Colom to use the already existent military structure rather than establish a new department with the same skills.

In the estimation of Costa Rica’s leadership, simply reducing the size of the military is a half measure that could easily be undone to oppressive conclusions. Likewise, keeping the military around in some form would be a crutch to rely on instead of developing civilian led initiatives, strong in their own right. Better to completely eliminate the army than try and reengineer the inherently authoritarian culture therein.

B. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

According to the U.S. State Department, the overall criminal threat rating for Costa Rica’s capital city is “High.”¹⁰⁷ While the most numerous crimes are non-violent theft, the drug trade has empowered organized criminal groups in recent years and is a much more serious problem than petty crime. Costa Rican Minister of Public Safety,

¹⁰⁵ Philip J Williams and Mark Ruhl, “Demilitarization after Central American Civil Wars,” 221.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 236.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security Costa Rica 2014 Crime and Safety Report, accessed 10 Dec 2015, <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=16121>.

Gustavo Mata, said in 2015 that, “Drug trafficking is now the country’s main security problem.”¹⁰⁸ Even so, there are far fewer gangs in Costa Rica than are contained in its regional peers. The lessened gang activity in Costa Rica stems from two byproducts of its human development.

First, the high standard of living in Costa Rica creates a stable government and requires relatively high taxation, so the legal residents of the state must pay into a system that provides the security that they enjoy. Rather than expanding illicit activities to politically stable populations, like that of Costa Rica which also expect taxes from residents, criminal organizations find less capable states to exploit. Therefore, there are fewer Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) settling in Costa Rica than neighboring states despite its closer proximity to drug sources than the likes of El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras. The inverse correlation between having a strong state and weak DTOs is evident. For any nation wishing to use non-military actors to fortify their states, they must be willing to invest in other forms of state-sponsored security.

Second, as a stable democracy, Costa Rica has far fewer emigrants seeking to make a home in the United States (or other countries) legally or illegally. When discussing this topic in their book, *Maras*, Professor Thomas Bruneau et al. noted that gangs like *Calle 18* or *Maras* did not exist in Central America until gang members were deported back to these countries from the United States.¹⁰⁹ Without a returning criminal population, educated in the U.S. on organized crime methods, the base level of illicit intelligence did not exist.

Still, according to the U.S. State Department, Costa Rica’s location between U.S. demand and Andean supply, makes it a bridge state in the literal sense. Increased DTO activity in Central America has required an increased response by Central American governments. For Costa Rica’s part, the nation increased its cocaine seizures by 33% and

¹⁰⁸ Charlotte Mackenzie, “Costa Rica: No longer the ‘Switzerland’ of Central America,” *Latin Correspondent*, 29 October 2015, <http://latin correspondent.com/2015/10/costa-rica-no-longer-the-switzerland-of-central-america/>.

¹⁰⁹ Al Valdez, “The Origins of Southern California Latino Gangs,” in *Maras*, eds. Thomas Bruneau, Lucia Dammert, and Elizabeth Skinner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 23.

its marijuana seizures by 50% from 2012 to 2013.¹¹⁰ Growth of international DTOs has been such a problem that Costa Rica's government, in conjunction with the United Nations and Canada, launched a first of its kind: "Costa Rica Situation Report on Drug Trafficking and the Threat of Organized Crime." The stated goal of the report was to propose a common vision among international institutions, regional organizations, and their counterparts for combating the flow of illicit goods.¹¹¹ Though the suggested actions included in the report were superficial in that they contained no directions on how to reduce drug trafficking, the existence of the report and effort behind its production demonstrate the attention Costa Rica and the international community is paying to the crisis posed in bridge countries. Drug demand has not diminished in the past decade so one can only assume Costa Rica will continue to contribute to the fight against drug trafficking for the foreseeable future.

The United Nations report on drugs and crime advertises that Costa Rica has had the lowest homicide rate in Central America and one of the lowest in the Western Hemisphere since 2000.¹¹² The lower instances of drug use and lessened involvement of DTOs contribute greatly to the lack of violent crime and make it easier for politicians to shun the use of military deterrence. Part of the reason that Costa Rica does not have a military is that in addition to not having external enemies, it has few internal criminals that warrant the unconventional use of a standing army.

Despite Costa Rica's relative peace, there is still a requirement for police forces. Even in the absence of clear external enemies and internal paramilitary forces, disruptions to internal order often require force. Countries in similar international situations as Costa Rica, like El Salvador and Guatemala, site internal security as a reason to maintain their militaries. National forces are used for law enforcement, anti-drug

¹¹⁰ U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security: Costa Rica 2014 Crime and Safety Report.

¹¹¹ United Nations, "Costa Rica Situation Report 2013: Drug Trafficking and the Threat of Organized Crime," accessed 11 Dec 2015, http://www.unodc.org/documents/ropan/Sitation_Report/Reporte_de_Situacion_de_Costa_Rica_de_2013.pdf.

¹¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed 11 Dec 2015, <https://data.unodc.org/#state:8>.

efforts, border security, and disaster relief. Without a clear charter for which governmental organizations would take the burden of national security away from the military, the standing army will have to exist.

Article 12 of the Costa Rican constitution asserts that, “The Army as a permanent institution is abolished. There shall be the necessary police forces for surveillance and the preservation of the public order.”¹¹³ Costa Rica legally mandated that national security be accomplished with institutions other than a standing army. However, the constitution specifies neither what those institutions will be, nor how many personnel they will employ, deferring to modern necessity and local officials. Today, Costa Rica’s police forces include: National Police, Judicial Investigators, National Migratory Police, Coast Guard, and Transit Police. Each office has its own specific responsibilities.

C. NATIONAL POLICE

The National Police is the largest of Costa Rica’s internal security force. It was created in 1949, the same year the abolition of expeditionary military was formalized. The Ministry of Public Security is the federal entity that oversees the National Police. There are fourteen stated functions of the organization and they range from specific to vague. For example, some of the National Police functions are actions normally accomplished in the U.S. by the department of Alcohol Tobacco & Firearms (ATF), while their final charge is: “Other duties and activities specified by the law.”¹¹⁴

Costa Rica’s National Police is the nation’s primary means of law enforcement in much the same way as uniformed police officers in the United States are. The considerable breadth of issues with which the National Police is expected to contend would suggest a large number of officers in their employ, yet the organization only counts 13,500 members.¹¹⁵ Exactly how much is spent on each department within Costa

¹¹³ Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica, Title I, Article 12.

¹¹⁴ Fuerza Publica, accessed 10 Dec 2015, <http://www.fuerzapublica.go.cr/funciones/>.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security: Costa Rica 2014 Crime and Safety Report.

Rica's internal security is difficult to tease out. In general, Ticos spend approximately 0.5% of their GDP on "Public Security."¹¹⁶

While the National Police does cover a wide area of enforcement duties, they do not possess the capacity to bring resolution to issues that require investigation. The primary legal body for investigation is the Organismo de Investigacion Judicial (OIJ).

D. ORGANISMO DE INVESTIGACION JUDICIAL

The OIJ acts as the investigative body for Costa Rican law and is most closely likened to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The U.S. State Department advises America travelers "To have a crime investigated and/or prosecuted, it must be reported to (OIJ)."¹¹⁷ Organizationally, they fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice but are tasked to work hand in hand with the National Police and other legal entities of the nation. The crimes handled by the OIJ are specifically those requiring attention over time like drug trafficking, human trafficking, and kidnapping. Incidentally, kidnapping crimes are resolved to a 100% success rate in Costa Rica. OIJ personnel are generally not in uniform and part of the organizations core values is "mystique," insinuating that their ability to remain clandestine is an operational necessity.¹¹⁸

E. NATIONAL MIGRATION POLICE

Migration Police in Costa Rica are charged with the general inflow and outflow of persons, products, and services for the country. More specifically the Migration Police serve two main purposes. First, as a bridge state, Costa Rica is a thoroughfare for legal and illegal migrants alike. It is important to note that illegal human immigration is not

¹¹⁶ Jaime Ordóñez, Diego Padilla, Timothy Andrews Sayle, and Patricia DeGennaro, "The Republic of Costa Rica: A Case Study on the Process of Democracy Building," accessed 14 Dec 2015, http://www.academia.edu/3540204/The_Republic_of_Costa_Rica_A_Case_Study_on_the_Process_of_Democracy_Building_Appendix_IX_Costa_Rican_Democracy_A_Dividend_of_Disarmament.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security: Costa Rica 2014 Crime and Safety Report.

¹¹⁸ Organismo de Investigacion Judicial, accessed 11 Dec 2015, http://www.poder-judicial.go.cr/oij/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=102.

necessarily tied to the drug trade. In November of 2015, the use of Costa Rica as a bridge state took on a new trend as Cubans seeking to trek through Central America to the United States were bottlenecked at the Costa Rica – Nicaragua border.¹¹⁹ Additionally, crimes like drug trafficking, human trafficking, and kidnapping can be disrupted by focused attention on intrastate movement.

Second, immigration is an international relations issue by nature. Better understanding of the immigration patterns into its own nation advance understanding of the region and can have a weighty impact on foreign relations. Costa Rica is a successful nation in its own right and as such is a lure to immigrants seeking a better life than surrounding countries can offer. Foreign nationals apply for asylum in hopes of legitimately evading deportation. In 2013, Costa Rica received 1,150 asylum seekers and virtually the same number the year prior.¹²⁰ The global detention project explains that in 2013, Costa Rica housed 419,000 migrants.¹²¹ The global detention project numbers suggest that just under 10% of those living in Costa Rica come from abroad.

For a nation home to less than 5 million total inhabitants, the number of non-citizens is staggering with almost one in ten people internationally transient. Specifically, Costa Rica's northern neighbor Nicaragua is the source of roughly 75% of the immigrants within its borders.¹²² Such large numbers of non-citizens from Nicaragua has created another strain between two nations that have an already historically troubled relationship. The Migration Police play a role in keeping international relations subdued between the bordering countries. Similar to Mexico – U.S. relations, Nicaragua and Costa Rica have a complicated immigration relationship.

¹¹⁹ Carrie Kahn, "Nicaraguan Police Block Cubans Attempting to Reach U.S.," *NPR*, accessed 11 Dec 2015, <http://www.npr.org/2015/11/17/456395444/nicaraguan-police-block-cubans-attempting-to-reach-u-s>.

¹²⁰ The Global Detention Project, accessed 11 Dec 2015, <http://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/americas/costa-rica/introduction.html>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² The Global Detention Project.

F. COAST GUARD

The *GuardaCosta* organization is a sub-institution of the Costa Rican National Police and as such also falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Security. Since GuardaCosta personnel are first and foremost officials of the National Police, they are obliged to work toward the same 14 stated goals. In practice, however, the main duty of the Costa Rican Coast Guard is drug enforcement. Because of Costa Rica's geographic position as a bridge state, a 2015 estimate reasons that 80% of materials passing through Costa Rican ports are illicit.¹²³ The GuardaCosta's role in disrupting the flow of illegal materials through its borders is key to the global fight against drugs. As the hemisphere's leading user of illegal narcotics, the United States has an interest in aiding its regional ally in drug interdiction. U.S. aerial surveillance is regularly offered to aid Costa Rica's GuardaCosta.

G. DISASTER RELIEF

President Arias contended that disaster relief is one of the areas in which a strong national police can replace a standing army.¹²⁴ The inclusion of natural disasters in the Costa Rican metric for abolishing its military makes sense for a country susceptible to earthquakes, hurricanes, and flooding. A World Bank sponsored study on natural disasters found that, "Cost Rica ranks number two in the world among countries most exposed to multiple hazards, with 80% of the country's GDP and 78% of Costa Rica's population in high-risk areas."¹²⁵ That said, there is no specific office in Costa Rica's federal government assigned to disaster relief. This duty is a shared burden of all civilian forces.

¹²³ Charlotte Mackenzie, "Costa Rica: No longer the 'Switzerland' of Central America," *Latin Correspondent*.

¹²⁴ Oscar Arias Sanchez, "Costa Rica's Arias calls on Uruguay's Pepe to Disband Army," *Latin American Herald Tribune*.

¹²⁵ Treasury World Bank report, accessed 11 Dec 2015, http://treasury.worldbank.org/bdm/pdf/Case_Study/CostaRica_CatDDO.pdf.

H. TRANSIT POLICE

Unlike the GuardiaCosta, Costa Rica's Transit Police does not fall under the Ministry of Public Security. Instead, the Transit Police fall under the Costa Rican equivalent of the U.S. Department of Transportation and are responsible for all operations on public conveyances. The Transit Police manage vehicle operations on public areas as well as public transportation like buses.

I. STATE SECURITY

Without an army, the State must make the necessary adjustments to law and cooperation with the people to secure the population without expeditionary forces. Costa Rica has done so by establishing a civil system of legal cooperation and enforcement while using those same institutions to help its international causes. In-state legal bodies like the National Police and Transit Police, border agencies like the Coast-Guard and Immigration Police, and investigatory units like the OIJ have all worked to protect Costa Rica and Costa Ricans without the need for foreign focused might.

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VII. CONCLUSION

From its foundation as a Spanish colony, to its development into one of the most stable governments on the Western Hemisphere, Costa Rica has been molded in such a way that the only rationale decision regarding the existence of an army is the abolition thereof. Spain's method of colonization and extraction from its New World entities precluded the use of a standing army for the country and instilled in its pioneers a sense of united colonial identity separate from the Crown. When an army was founded, it was done so in the same laissez-faire manner as the rest of the country's institutions and was thus not particularly robust. The presence of a weak army only further perpetuated the Costa Rican culture that is opposed to military rule.

The economic evolution of the small nation was based on agricultural yield, communal toil of the land, and international commerce, none of which were aided by the presence of a strong military and in fact was often hurt by military events. Furthermore, as the economy strengthened and changed from extraction to self-reliance, resources were spent on internal infrastructure rather than expended on developing weaponry and military skills. Increased infrastructure contributed more to the success of in-state endeavors and fed more into increased national capacity. In the absence of a standing army, the state was able to focus attention on institutions that had been neglected while Costa Rica was a colony of the Spanish crown.

External threats have never existed for Central America to the same degree as have existed in much of the rest of the world. When the region was subjected to extractive policies, it was done by the colonizing power that would eventually grant a peaceful independence. When the region found reason to engage in hostile activities with other states, all of the skirmishes were short lived. During the World Wars, Costa Rica made the tactical decision to provide economic support versus military aid and in doing so was able to capitalize on peaceful relationships with trading partners. Also, the nation's security strategy revolves around relationships with neighbors and the hemispheric Great Power, The United States, to de-incentivize cross-national conflict.

In centuries past, the greatest threat to national security in Latin America has been internal discord that degenerates into violence. Coups, dictatorships, small scale revolts and then like have plagued all of Latin America for generations. Costa Rica has known its fair share of such conflict and made the decision to remove one of the common threads in the anti-stability toolset when it ridded itself of military forces. Even more, the state has established roadblocks to the resurgence of an army by ensuring funds that could be used by national forces are instead used for human development to increase the state's competitiveness in liberal markets.

In order to maintain a stable nation, Costa Rica structured its instate peacekeeping forces in such a way that the duties traditionally reserved for professional soldiers are within the jurisdiction of civilian personnel who are funded, trained, and legally empowered to carry out their missions. In the same way that national pride can be consolidated around a country's standing army, Ticos share a pride in their civilian led services, their educational opportunities, and their peaceful ideals.

Though there is no mathematical equation for peace, the four elements of: culture, economic evolution, domestic development, and external threats are required facets of any discussion. Viable civilian alternatives to the military must also be established and nurtured in order to provide security and eliminate the call to empower a standing army. As the natures of conflict and cooperation change, it will not be easy to shift from warring states to peaceful states, but it would be arguably easier than training, equipping, and ultimately burying our warriors.

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